

Harper Green School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105257
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	377213
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Austin HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul McCarthy
Headteacher	Robert Flood
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 50 lessons taught by 49 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, groups of students, representatives of the governing body and the School's Improvement professional. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation regarding students' progress, their behaviour, the curriculum and safeguarding procedures. Responses to questionnaires returned by 174 parents and carers, 102 staff and 445 students were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The rate of students' progress and how well they achieve.
- The standard of students' behaviour and how effectively the school manages this.
- How effectively the school develops students' literacy skills.
- The rigour of the school's quality assurance processes in contributing to improvement.

Information about the school

Harper Green is much larger than the average secondary school. The large majority of students are White British while others belong to a number of minority ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school has specialist status in the performing and visual arts and has been awarded the gold Artsmark. It has gained the International School award and recognition as a Healthy School.

The headteacher took up post in September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Harper Green School is satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory, although they make good progress in their learning. This is because their basic skills, particularly in literacy, are weak and this hinders their attainment in English as well as in other areas, so that their attainment is low overall. A key factor in students' progress is the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for students. An inclusive approach permeates this large school so that all are known as individuals. Students say that the degree to which they feel safe is outstanding. Good relationships are central to the school's culture of mutual respect. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that students get the support that matches their needs. The success of this is evident in: the good progress made by all groups including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities; above average levels of attendance; and students' good behaviour.

Students' good progress is the consequence of good teaching which challenges students and captures their interest. Students respond very positively to teachers' enthusiasm and their good subject knowledge. However, assessment information is not always used as sharply as it could be to plan activities that closely match the needs of all students and promote their independence in learning. The good curriculum is enriched by the very well-established specialist work in the performing and visual arts. Other strengths lie in the broad range of alternative work-based provision for Key Stage 4 students which helps to make learning relevant for them. As one student said, 'It has really made me think about my behaviour and how I work in a team'. In addition, units such as the DEN and the ibase support students with a range of barriers to learning very effectively. There is a planned approach to developing students' literacy skills in all subjects but the school recognises that more needs to be done to embed this fully and maximise its impact.

Leadership and management are good and the school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. Systematic quality assurance procedures combine effectively with the regular tracking of students' progress to provide a realistic view of the school's work. A particular strength is the interface between subject departments and the year teams which leads to outstanding support for students' both academic and personal development. A comparative weakness is in the strategic analysis of data and in evaluating the impact of initiatives. Governance is good: the governing body is well informed and provides a good level of challenge to leaders. The school has good capacity to improve as demonstrated by provision which is at least good, students'

good progress and their good personal development. Although low attainment in English continues to be a major challenge, GCSE results have risen markedly since the previous inspection and the school meets, or exceeds, its challenging targets. The school is judged to provide satisfactory value for money because outcomes for students' are satisfactory.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment to at least average overall, and particularly in English, by:
 - embedding fully a whole-school approach to improving students' literacy skills
 - using assessment information fully in planning lessons so that they meet students' differing needs
 - developing approaches that foster independence in learning
 - ensuring that the impact of initiatives to raise students' attainment is monitored and evaluated fully.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students make good progress from starting points that are below average in mathematics but low in English. The school reaches challenging targets with a trend of strong performance in mathematics and science. There are no significant differences between the progress of various groups of students. Students are keen to do well, enthusiastic and apply themselves diligently in lessons. They listen carefully and collaborate well in pairs and groups. For example, in a Year 8 technology lesson students worked with determination to produce a variety of designs for a mobile phone holder, helping one another with ideas and constructive criticism.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They behave well and are polite and courteous. They respond well to the system that rewards their hard work and good behaviour with points and prizes. The specialism makes a significant contribution to expanding students' cultural horizons as well as their opportunities to participate in arts activities. Students have a good understanding of how to make healthy and safe choices. A substantial proportion regularly participate in the broad range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Their contribution to the school in a range of leadership roles, including as school radio DJs, prefects and sports leaders, is good. The views of the school council are taken on board and departments regularly seek students' perspectives on teaching and learning in their subjects. Although students' basic skills are underdeveloped, their positive attitudes to learning, above-average attendance, good behaviour and well-developed collaborative skills mean they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their lives. The proportion who have failed to go on to education, training and employment has reduced significantly in recent years and is below the local average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	4
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Overall, teaching is good with some that is outstanding and none inadequate. Lessons move at a good pace with well-managed changes from one task to another. Teachers plan a good variety of activities and make effective use of carefully selected resources, including new technologies, to hold students' interest. Good use is made of peer- and self-assessment to help students understand how to improve their work. For example, in art and design Year 11 students evaluated the work of others on a project to create a themed bag. This helped them apply the assessment criteria and understand the implications for their own work. Where teaching is less successful, planning does not always take full account of students' prior learning and abilities so work is not closely tailored to students' individual needs. This slows students' progress, reducing their opportunities to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning. Students receive good oral feedback on their work and much marking is helpful in showing where improvements can be made.

The good curriculum is well matched to students' needs. In Years 7 and 8 additional time is dedicated to literacy for all students, with further support for those whose reading and spelling are very weak. There is a whole-school approach to developing literacy in all subjects, although this is not fully embedded. At Key Stage 4, three pathways guide students to appropriate courses and qualifications. The school works with a large number of partners to provide valuable work-based vocational opportunities for a significant proportion of older students. The curriculum supports students' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy well. Lunchtimes are vibrant as a high number of students participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities such as badminton, film group, history club, choir and band. There is a broad range of enrichment opportunities, enhanced by the school's specialism.

The work of the year teams is pivotal in securing outstanding care, guidance and support for students. This enables students to feel exceptionally safe. Careful tracking of students' personal and academic progress results in closely targeted support. This has proved successful, for instance in raising attendance to above

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

average. The school draws on both its good links with external agencies and its good range of in-house expertise, to provide specialist support for those students who require it. There is a range of specific provision to meet the varying needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, as well as those with particular learning difficulties. Transition arrangements are robust, helped by the regular activities which staff and students lead in local primary schools. Questionnaire responses from Year 7 students and their parents or carers are very positive about the support provided for the move from Year 6.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has a clear sense of shared moral purpose and high expectations. As questionnaires show, staff morale is high. Under the new headteacher, improvement planning is being revised and reviews are underway of key areas of the school's work. Senior and middle leaders work together closely to drive improvement: levels of accountability are robust and clearly understood. Leaders have the requisite skills to conduct thorough reviews and recognise where developments are needed. This has been effective in accurately identifying training needs and in sustaining the good quality of teaching and learning. Tracking systems are well established and provide a wealth of data, although this is not always used as fully as it could be. Evaluation of the impact of initiatives lacks rigour. The pastoral care systems are highly effective in meeting the wide range of students' needs. The school deploys a significant number of non-teaching staff to good effect, for example as part of the year teams that support students.

The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Safeguarding procedures are good. Equal opportunities are promoted well so that there are no marked differences between the progress of the various groups of students. The few racist incidents that occur are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. The school engages well with parents and carers, keeping them well informed about their child's progress. The school is a cohesive community in itself and has an important place in the local community, for instance through its well-established arts festival. Links with local primary schools are long standing and sustained, in part, through the school's specialist work which supports smooth transition well. The school's international award reflects its work to give students wider perspectives on the world. There are established links with a school in Denmark. Partnerships to enhance the curriculum, draw on specialist support, and raise students' horizons, are good.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A lower than average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. In almost all areas, responses were more positive than is found nationally. However, the degree to which the school takes account of the views of parents and carers gained an average response. While inspectors found the school's engagement with parents and carers about their child's education to be good, consideration of the views of the parent body at a strategic level is less well developed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harper Green School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,439 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	36	98	56	6	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	89	51	80	46	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	86	49	81	47	5	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	45	80	46	7	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	84	48	82	47	4	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	40	90	52	6	3	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	32	105	60	7	4	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	77	44	84	48	3	2	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	41	94	54	2	1	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	77	44	86	49	3	2	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	32	92	53	9	5	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	75	43	90	52	6	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	98	56	64	37	5	3	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Harper Green School, Bolton – BL4 0DH

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school recently. We valued the opportunity to talk to some of you in groups as well as in your lessons. Your views helped us reach our judgements.

Your school has many strengths. You behave well and your attendance is above average. You make a good contribution to the community, for instance as junior sports leaders and through the arts festival. Your radio station helps to create a relaxed atmosphere at lunchtimes. You make good progress because teaching is good. You have a good choice of courses at Key Stage 4, including some work-based options such as construction and hairdressing. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that many of you enjoy and which help to keep you healthy. A significant strength of the school is the way in which staff know you all as individuals and provide outstanding care, guidance and support. Facilities such as the DEN and ibase really help some of you to learn and develop your personal skills.

Despite these strengths, we have judged the school to be satisfactory overall. This is because the GCSE results show that compared with young people nationally; attainment is low at the end of Year 11. This is particularly the case in English and it is hampering your learning in other areas. So we have asked the headteacher and staff to do all they can to raise your attainment overall and particularly in English. We have suggested that the following developments would help:

- embedding a whole-school approach to improving your literacy skills
- planning activities in lessons that match your needs very closely and help you to be independent learners
- ensuring that the impact of initiatives is monitored and evaluated fully.

You can help by working as hard as possible on your reading and writing. You are lucky to have ipads and kindles available in the library to help you enjoy this.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

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